

CASE STUDY



South Staffordshire
Council

Located north of Wolverhampton in the Midlands, UK, the county of Staffordshire is divided into eight districts, of which South Staffordshire is one. South Staffordshire District Council provides a wide range of services for its residents including housing benefits, waste collection, environmental health, homelessness prevention and planning enforcement, to name just a handful.



THE COMPLIANCE CHALLENGE

In May 2020, the Council was launching a new paid-for Garden Waste Collection service. The annual subscription is available to all households in the council's district and the project team was anticipating that at least 16,000 subscriptions would be taken-up when the initiative launched. The council's team were tasked with setting up the systems to handle the influx of registrations, as Sue Gilbert, ICT Change Manager, explains:

“Initially, we were keen to drive as much traffic as possible through the website, however we needed to offer residents an alternative method to set-up a subscription. The waste and recycling team wanted there to be a telephone payment option, to offer flexibility.

Three years prior however, the council had taken the decision to stop its contact center staff from having to handle telephone payments, as Sue confirms:

“As part of our commitment to meeting PCI DSS requirements, we took the decision to take all phone-based payments away from our staff and instead route them via an automated IVR system. Here, residents use a special payment reference to input their details. For this project however, the registration process meant we needed to capture more details and, ideally, all within a single system, so we needed staff to personally handle these calls in their entirety.”

Assistance was therefore needed to set-up a secure payment system that would enable the council's contact centre team of 10 to guide residents through the registration process and handle the resulting payment transaction in a secure and compliant way.

On top of this, the time-scales of the project were tight; the project was originally scoped in September 2019. It received political approval to proceed in January 2020, with the launch to take place from the start of May. This meant all the systems needed to be fully operational by the end of April.

An unanticipated challenge that subsequently came with the project was the arrival of the global pandemic, which saw the council's staff transition to home working during March.



THE SOLUTION

Andy Hoare, Assistant Director Business Transformation for South Staffordshire Council was leading the project and, as an existing customer of the Capita Pay360 service, contacted the team at Capita to understand what contact centre secure payment options were available to them in order to meet the imminent deadline.



“It was hard for us to anticipate the demand in the new subscription service, however we had done our homework and seen how other councils had handled the introduction of the paid-for garden waste service. We knew to expect a significant peak in calls during the registration time frame and therefore we needed to identify a system that would not only integrate with our existing contact centre system for a seamless way of working, but that was quick and easy for our staff and callers to use. We are a relatively rural council with an

elderly population, and we knew we needed a system where our contact centre staff could remain in conversation with callers through the registration and payment process, yet ensure all payment details were provided in an anonymous way and transacted away from our infrastructure to meet PCI DSS rules.” Having spoken with Capita to scope the project, the team quickly got to work on implementing its Call Secure Plus, powered by PCI Pal.

“Call Secure Plus ticked a lot of boxes for us; it could be integrated with our My Pay online payment tool, which is where all web-based registrations were being handled. This would make it as straight forward as possible and keep everything in one place, regardless of the method used.” It means our contact centre staff

go into the My Pay website, opt for the telephone payment option and customers then provide their payment details using their telephone keypads to key in the credit card numbers, when instructed by the agent. Using one system, reduced the learning curve, and made everything as seamless as possible.”



RESULTS

A significant advantage has been that Call Secure Plus is a cloud-based solution, meaning it was deployed remotely, with no on-premise installation needed. Adds Sue:

“Something we hadn’t anticipated at the outset was the fact that we would all be working remotely by the end of March. The project team were all extremely responsive to our needs throughout, training was conducted via Teams and the fact we could continue to meet our original deadline was a real achievement.”

The council originally set itself a target of achieving 16,000 subscriptions, however it has since processed over 30,000, of which around 6,000 were handled via the contact centre staff over the phone.

Explains Andy: “We had everything ready by our deadline and we started taking payments in May. As soon as the leaflets were sent out, we started to see registrations quickly grow. We gave the online registration method a head start, but the team were well prepared to handle calls, even while working from home.”

Originally, six user licenses of the Call Secure Plus solution were organised for the Council’s contact centre, however at the peak of the registration period it was quickly extended to 10 in order to handle the increased demand.

“It may not sound a huge number of agents for some organisations, however for the size of our council that’s a sizeable chunk of people handling calls, over a sustained period of time. In the first three weeks of launching the new service, the calls were non-stop. The service was swift and seamless, and as such have been able to secure almost double the original amount of registrations we envisaged at the outset.” adds Sue. The integration with the existing contact centre systems and payment gateways was highlighted as a key success factor of the project.

“For this project to be a success, the registration process had to be as straight forward and simple for our agents. If there was any delay or issue using the solution, it could quickly turn into a complaint. Due to the volumes, it also had to be an efficient process, so the fact our agents could talk callers through the process, meant they could assist and ensure everyone was happy and able to complete the transaction with ease. Also, by integrating the telephone-based payments into the existing reconciliation in our accounts ledger, we were able to continue using our tried and tested payment interface, providing an integrated journey.”



“I believe how we handled this project as an organisation – and given the constraints posed by Coronavirus – this is a real success story. We didn’t design the solution to enable home working, however the flexibility of the Call Secure Plus solution, powered by PCI Pal has really shown its worth.

It is very rare that you design a service and have to go-live with the business continuity plan from

day one, but that’s what we did, and with support from Capita and PCI Pal, the whole project has gone extremely well and not only do we intend to use it for renewals next year, the garden waste subscription being the catalyst, we are now reviewing other potential usages across the council.”

Andy Hoare
Assistant Director Business Transformation

OUR ACCREDITATIONS



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